

6 : LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT (APR) 2001

Report of the Cabinet

- 1 The Cabinet has considered a report from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation which presented Annual Progress Report (APR) information on the first year of the Council 5 year Local Transport Plan (LTP).
- 2 The Cabinet supported a recommendation that the APR and its funding bid is supported by full Council. This is needed in view of the substantial transport investment being proposed over the coming years.
- 3 The first Full Five-year LTP was submitted to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) in July 2000. It described the Council's Transport Strategy for 2001/02 to 2005/06 and made a bid for borrowing approval so that the strategy can be implemented. It was well received, securing such approval for £14.4m for 2001/02; a 120% increase on the previous year and a higher increase than the South East average of 99%.
- 4 Although the LTP does not have to be up-dated until 2005, Government requires an APR outlining steps taken to implement the strategy.
- 5 Government Guidance suggests the APR should not describe progress on each individual initiative or scheme. It should report on the general progress of the strategy and performance indicators, and should only refer to specific initiatives if they are significant in some way, either by virtue of their profile, cost or if they are examples of best practice or innovation. The APR should also draw attention to partnership working, consultations, integration with other policy areas (such as the Council Plan), and cross-cutting work.
- 6 The financial settlement letter from GOSE in December 2000 described how much borrowing power the LTP had secured for 2001/02 with indicative amounts given for the remaining four years. The Guidance from Government for this APR states that the Council should assume that it will only get the indicative amount for 2002/03, and that it should build the 2002/03 programme on the basis of that figure. There is a gap between the original bid for 2002/03 and the

indicative amount for that year. Although programmes have had to be tailored according to the indicative amount, every effort has been made to fully fund the priority areas of maintenance and safety in that year.

- 7 Additional discretionary funding can be secured, depending mainly on the progress achieved shown by the performance indicators. Additional funding can also be secured via 'Supplementary Bids' for items that could not reasonably have been included in the original strategy. Examples of this include funding for the A41(T) (once the Council takes over this responsibility), work associated with the opening of the East West Railway between Bicester and Bletchley, works associated with the Government's scheme at Handy Cross (J4 of the M40), and for works associated with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).
- 8 Examples of progress made over the last year or so include:
 - The use of low noise road surfacing in urban areas has been extended;
 - Work on the A418 Oxford Road railway bridge in Aylesbury has progressed to schedule;
 - The North Wycombe Action Area around Hamilton School was implemented, including a 20mph zone;
 - 14 School Travel Plans have now been completed;
 - Partnership working with the Police on the 'Safer Roads' initiative progressed, with the trial of investing speed camera fines in safety schemes paying dividends. Between April 2000 and December 2000 there was a 21% reduction in people killed or seriously injured on the County's roads;
 - New bus services have been provided with the introduction of six wheelchair accessible buses on a network of 'Easy Bus' routes, including three commuter routes to railway stations such as Beaconsfield;
 - The East-West cycle route in High Wycombe opened in partnership with the District Council;
 - The first phase of the environmental enhancements in Chesham have been completed in partnership with Chiltern District Council and the Town Consortium;

- The County Council's own Travel Plan won a national award and helped to reduce car journeys by staff to County Hall in Aylesbury by 15%; and
 - Park Street in Aylesbury had environmental enhancements including safety and parking improvements.
- 9 With the significant increase in funding for 2001/02 and beyond, it is important to ensure that all vacant positions are filled quickly by suitably qualified staff. This has been a problem in some areas of Transportation, both locally and nationally, partly because of general shortages in some areas of expertise. In addition it is important to 'work smarter', maximise the use of new technology, and integrate efforts and policies across Services.
- 10 The funding for the LTP is in the form of borrowing approvals, with the exception of the funding of schemes costing more than £5m which is in the form of Grant. There is a revenue implication for the borrowing approvals, as the Revenue Support Grant does not fully cover the loan repayments.
- 11 The LTP had a comprehensive programme of consultation during its development. Following its submission to GOSE, research carried out early in 2001 found that 93% of the 1500 local people questioned either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the transport strategy. Less than 2% actually disagreed. This shows that consultations have resulted in a strategy that enjoys very broad support. Other public consultations have tended to confirm this Council's priorities of maintenance and safety.
- 12 The Local Transport Consultation Partnership also offers broad support for the LTP, although it was suggested by the Group that improved infrastructure provision for rural bus services (such as accessible and well lit bus stops), and better public transport information are particularly important. Similar feedback has been received from the public.
- 13 Supporting statements from the District Councils will be included in the APR when they are received. The results of a survey of 1000 local businesses, asking them how satisfied they are with the transport system, will be known by the end of July 2001 and included in the APR.

- 14 As a strategy document the APR needs to show how the transport strategy is helping to deliver wider policy initiatives and integration. The APR itself describes how the LTP is consistent with Best Value (Local Government Act 1999), the evolving community strategy and the powers the Council has to promote well-being (Local Government Act 2000), the Urban and Rural White Papers (2000), this Council's own Council Plan and Capital Strategy. The APR also describes how the LTP helps to promote health and social well-being in the County, including with regard to disability issues (Disability Discrimination Act 1995).
- 15 Complete copies of The Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2001: Improving Travel Conditions and Opportunities in Buckinghamshire (DRAFT) may be obtained from the Contact Officer, Mark Thompson (Tel: 01296 382080).

RECOMMENDED

- 1 That the APR and its financial bid prior to its submission to GOSE in August 2001, be supported;**
- 2 That authority for final amendments to be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation and the Head of Spatial Planning, be agreed.**